

Charles County Government County Administrator Standard Operating Procedure

Title:	Telework Program	SOP #: CAP.HR.01.004
Department:	Human Resources	Effective Date: 3/9/2009
Division:	Administration	Last Review Date: 5/21/2020
Purpose:	This Telework Program allows approved employees to work from a remote workplace on a routine schedule, or situational basis. The program enables employees to be more productive, improve work-life balance, and is designed to reduce employee turnover. Allowing eligible employees to work from home also reduces the number of vehicles on the road for daily commuting. This reduction can help improve air quality and reduce traffic congestion.	
References:	Memorandum for the Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies	
	Charles County Government Personnel Policy and Procedures Manual	
	CAP.FAS.04.001 Information Technology Use and Security Policy	
	Charles County Government Safety Manual	
Attachments:	Telework Request Form	
	Remote Workplace Self-Certification Checklist	

Procedure:

In recognizing the changing nature of the work performed and of its workforce, Charles County Government (the County) is focusing on ways to increase employee productivity and efficiency while helping employees achieve a more successful work-life balance and maintain employee morale. Teleworking is a nationally recognized way to make the workplace more family-friendly while improving both the workplace and the environment.

Charles County Government strives to recruit and retain a skilled, dedicated workforce and offer greater flexibility to employees while meeting the needs of a diverse resident population. The use of a Telework Program is an innovative way of promoting greater work/life balance for employees while serving the needs of Charles County residents. The Telework Program can be a valuable motivation and productivity tool. The Telework Program can also ensure continuity of operations during emergency situations by enabling some employees to work from remote locations.

1.0 Definitions

- 1.1 Department Head – Top executive of a County department. Includes the Department Directors, Deputy County Administrator, County Administrator, and County Attorney.
- 1.2 Eligible Employee – An employee whose job tasks, in-person collaboration needs, and remote workplace are suitable for a teleworking arrangement as determined by the employee and their supervisory chain of command (includes, but is not

limited to, the employee's supervisor, the Division Chief, and the Department Head.)

- 1.2.1 Positions that are eligible for telework are indicated on that position's job description.
- 1.2.2 New hires are eligible to telework after six (6) months of employment following a satisfactory performance appraisal. For emergency telework, this may be adjusted with the approval of the supervisory chain of command.
- 1.3 Emergency – An unforeseen, serious event that threatens life or well-being and that requires immediate action.
- 1.4 Main Office – The teleworker's usual and customary County work site.
- 1.5 Personally Identifiable Information (PII) – Refers to information which can be used to distinguish or trace an individual's identity, such as their name, social security number, biometric records, etc. alone, or when combined with other personal or identifying information which is linked or linkable to a specific individual, such as date and place of birth, mother's maiden name, etc.¹
- 1.6 Personnel Coordinator – An employee designated by the Department Head to enter timesheets and other personnel-related documents and reports.
- 1.7 Routine Telework Schedule – Pre-approved as an ongoing, regular telework schedule for an employee.
 - 1.7.1 An approved routine telework schedule allows an employee to telework a set, pre-determined number of days.
 - 1.7.2 The process of establishing work schedules should be sufficiently flexible to permit periodic adjustments, if any, to achieve an optimal schedule suiting employee and departmental requirements.
- 1.8 Situational Telework Schedule – Telework approved for a certain occasion or fixed time period, where hours teleworked were NOT part of a previously approved, regular telework schedule.
 - 1.8.1 Examples include, but are not limited to, hazard or emergency conditions, special work assignment, etc.
- 1.9 Teleworker – An employee who works at a remote workplace to produce an agreed upon work product.
- 1.10 Teleworking – Working at a location other than the employee's main office.

¹ Memorandum for the Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies, M-07-16, Office of Management and Budget, May 22, 2007. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/whitehouse.gov/files/omb/memoranda/2007/m07-16.pdf> May 5, 2020.

2.0 Employee Participation

- 2.1 Teleworking may be necessary and is voluntary. Employees in jobs suitable for teleworking may be permitted to telework on designated days, or on a situational or emergency basis.
- 2.2 Routine Telework – To initiate the process to telework on a routine basis, an employee must submit a completed Telework Request Form and a Remote Workplace Self-Certification Checklist (attached) to their supervisor.
 - 2.2.1 The supervisor will review the forms and indicate preliminary approval (with or without modifications) or denial to the request.
 - 2.2.2 If the supervisor approves the request and the remaining chain of command concurs, the supervisor will forward the Telework Request Form and the Self-Certification Checklist to the Division of Information Technology (IT) and the Department of Human Resources (HR) for review and comment.
 - 2.2.3 Final approval (with or without modifications) or denial is granted by the Department Head.
 - 2.2.4 If a Telework Request is denied, the employee's supervisory chain of command will meet with the employee to discuss the reasons for denial. The Telework Request Form will list the reason for the denial and if there are any remedies to allow for telework in the future.
 - 2.2.5 Employees who have been granted the opportunity to telework are subject to a six (6)-month trial period during which the employee will telework according to an agreed-upon schedule.
 - 2.2.6 The trial period allows supervisors and employees to discuss any concerns, work through issues, iron out scheduling details, and make any necessary adjustments to maintain high performance.
 - 2.2.7 Halfway through the trial period, supervisors must check-in with the teleworking employee to raise any concerns.
 - 2.2.8 Following the trial period, the supervisor and employee shall meet to assess the employee's telework agreement to determine if the employee will continue to telework or if termination of the telework agreement is warranted.
 - 2.2.9 If termination of the telework agreement is warranted, the supervisor will proceed according to the termination of telework agreement requirements outlined in Section 12.0 – Termination of Telework Agreement.
 - 2.2.10 Prior to each telework occasion, the teleworker will email their supervisor with a list of assignments they plan to complete. The supervisor will in turn reply with approval of those assignments and/or provide additional assignments or feedback.
 - 2.2.11 Employees who are approved for and engaged in long-term telework arrangements will work with their supervisory chain of command to develop a schedule for communicating work assignments. It is recommended that supervisors discuss work assignments with their teleworking staff on at least a weekly basis.

- 2.3 While teleworking, the employee must be reachable via telephone, email, and the County's instant messaging client during agreed upon work hours.
 - 2.3.1 Teleworkers must continue to follow the County's standards of returning phone calls and voicemails in a timely manner. It is recommended that teleworkers forward their desk phone to a number where they can be reached during teleworking. Voicemails may also be forwarded to the teleworker's email.
 - 2.3.2 Teleworkers must notify the office via email or the County's instant messaging client when they start and end the telework day, and if they leave the telework location, just as they would inform other staff in their traditional office during a regular work day.
 - 2.3.3 Teleworkers will also notify the office via email if they need to end the telework day early.
- 2.4 Typically, the hours of a telework day will be consistent with a department's normal business hours or the employee's regular work hours.
- 2.5 Timeline for responding to requests to telework – Supervisors and those in the requesting employee's chain of command should make good faith efforts to respond to requests based upon the following recommended time periods:
 - 2.5.1 Routine Telework Request: within 10 business days of receipt
 - 2.5.2 Situational Telework Request: within 5 business days of receipt
 - 2.5.3 Emergency Telework Request: within 24 hours of receipt
- 2.6 Situational or Emergency Telework – An employee who wishes to telework on a situational or emergency basis shall submit a request in writing, via email, or via text message to their supervisor. In some instances, an employee's supervisory chain of command may require an employee to telework.
 - 2.6.1 Supervisors may approve, on a case-by-case basis, employees to telework on a rare or occasional basis without requiring a Telework Request Form.
 - 2.6.2 Following approval, the employee will provide written documentation via email that details the assignments they will complete.
 - 2.6.3 Supervisors will forward the employee's written documentation to their chain of command for notification purposes.
 - 2.6.4 Situational or emergency telework may be approved when the County is closed due to inclement weather; or for other special circumstances, as deemed appropriate by the Department Head or supervisor.
 - 2.6.5 An employee who is teleworking must record the hours worked and leave earned and taken.
 - 2.6.6 If an employee's request for situational or emergency telework is granted, the employee is responsible for obtaining all necessary equipment/technology tools that will enable them to telework.
- 2.7 An employee who is teleworking may not conduct personal business while in an official duty status at the remote work site. Personal business includes, but is not

limited to, running personal errands; caring for dependents; making home repairs; and completing housework.

- 2.8 If the County is closed, on a delayed opening, or closes early on an employee's regularly scheduled telework day, the employee will also follow the same closure/early release or delayed opening and modify their schedule as needed.

3.0 Employment

- 3.1 The teleworker's duties, obligations, responsibilities, and conditions of employment with the County will be unaffected by teleworking.
- 3.2 The teleworker's salary, benefits, and County-sponsored insurance coverage will remain unchanged by the teleworking arrangement.
- 3.3 All work hours, overtime compensation, and leave usage must conform to Federal and State regulations, the Charles County Government Personnel Policy & Procedures Manual, the provisions of the Charles County Government Teleworker's Request Form, and the terms otherwise agreed upon by the employee and the Department Head.
- 3.3.1 Employees must account for all hours worked. Non-exempt employees must be compensated for all hours worked.
- 3.3.2 The teleworker must have the pre-approval of their supervisor before working overtime/compensatory time at a remote workplace.
- 3.4 Teleworkers are not permitted to host work-related meetings at their home but may participate in meetings by phone or video conference.

4.0 Equipment and Supplies

- 4.1 The teleworker must have a telephone, a designated workspace with County issued and/or County-approved equipment, and supplies to do the assigned work at the remote workplace.
- 4.1.1 Telework proposals will be evaluated on whether County issued equipment is already assigned to the employee; is portable in nature; or is otherwise readily available.
- 4.1.2 The County will not pay or be responsible for any increase in the employee's home utility or other costs incurred as a result of teleworking.
- 4.2 Unless receiving prior approval, teleworkers may not use their personal equipment to conduct County work. Utilizing unapproved equipment poses a serious security risk to County data and systems.
- 4.2.1 Employees who cannot complete their work with County-issued equipment and/or County-approved personal equipment must communicate this to their supervisors.

- 4.2.2 If necessary, an IT work request must be entered to acquire the necessary equipment.
- 4.3 If the teleworking employee will need internet access to complete work from the remote location, data services may be provided if funding is available. Otherwise, it is the responsibility of the employee to acquire broadband service.
- 4.4 IT will do its best to resolve help desk calls from teleworkers.
 - 4.4.1 If the issue cannot be resolved remotely, the teleworker shall report to the main office to resolve any issues.
 - 4.4.2 IT will not travel to a teleworker's remote workplace to resolve a technology issue.
- 4.5 Equipment provided shall remain the property of the County and shall be returned to the department upon termination of the employee's participation in the Telework Program or requested to do so by IT or the employee's supervisory chain of command.
- 4.6 The use of County equipment, software, data, and supplies is limited to use by authorized persons and should adhere to the County's Information Technology Use and Security Policy.
 - 4.6.1 Employees are required to complete online IT Security Awareness trainings to enhance their understanding of security vulnerabilities and to learn how to identify and thwart attempts to gain access to sensitive County information.
 - 4.6.2 Only the approved teleworker may utilize County issued equipment and access County networks.
 - 4.6.3 Employees who handle personally identifiable information (PII) or sensitive information must follow County guidelines to ensure the safety and security of that data.
- 4.7 The teleworker will be responsible for the security of all items furnished by the County. The teleworker will immediately report any lost or damaged equipment to their supervisor.
- 4.8 County issued equipment must be secured against theft and unauthorized access, and must be kept and used in a temperature-controlled environment
- 4.9 The teleworker may obtain from the main office all incidental office supplies needed for county-related work at the remote workplace. Unused office supplies should be returned to the main office when the telework agreement has ended or requested to do so by the supervisory chain of command.

5.0 Remote Workplace

- 5.1 The teleworker's remote workplace will be considered an extension of the County's workplace.
- 5.2 The teleworker shall identify a proposed remote workplace for approval in the Telework Request Form and the Remote Workplace Self-Certification Checklist.
- 5.3 The remote workplace should be maintained in a safe condition, free of hazards that might endanger the employee or County equipment. The teleworker agrees to maintain a workplace that is conducive to an effective and efficient work area.

6.0 Expenses

- 6.1 Work-related long-distance phone calls should be planned for in-office days if a cost will be incurred taking the phone call at a remote site.
- 6.2 At the discretion of the supervisor, expenses for long distance calls which must be made from a teleworker's remote work site may be reimbursed if the reason and cost for the call are documented. Such expenses must be approved in writing by the supervisor in advance.
- 6.3 The teleworker is responsible for the cost of maintenance, repair and operation of any personal equipment not provided by the County. This may include, but is not limited to, office furniture, office machines (i.e. stapler, hole punch) and personal phones.
- 6.4 Expenses for supplies regularly available at the main office will not be reimbursed unless pre-purchase approval has been granted by the teleworker's supervisor.

7.0 Liability for Injuries While Teleworking

- 7.1 The teleworker is covered under the State's Workers' Compensation Law for injuries occurring in the course of the actual performance of official duties at the remote workplace.
- 7.2 The teleworker or someone acting on the teleworker's behalf shall immediately notify the teleworker's supervisor of any accident or injury that occurs at the remote workplace.
- 7.3 The County and the supervisor should then refer to the Charles County Government Safety Manual (27.01 – Job Related Injury) regarding reporting of injuries for employees injured while at work.
- 7.4 The County is not liable for damages to the teleworker's personal or real property while teleworking.

8.0 Child/Dependent Care

- 8.1 Teleworking is not a substitute for child or dependent care.
- 8.2 The teleworker must continue to make arrangements for child or dependent care to the same extent as if the teleworker was working at the main office.
- 8.3 During emergency teleworking, a child or children may remain in the home. The teleworker should notify their supervisor of such arrangements and do their best to minimize any distractions.

9.0 Confidential Information

- 9.1 The teleworker and the supervisor shall take appropriate safeguards to secure confidential data and information. The IT Use & Security Policy applies to all teleworkers.

10.0 Discipline

- 10.1 The County's disciplinary procedures and drug and alcohol policies remain in effect and are not impacted or altered by an employee's status as a teleworker.
- 10.2 A supervisor may take appropriate disciplinary or adverse action against the teleworker for failing to comply with the provisions of the Teleworking Request Form and this SOP.
- 10.3 An employee who is late checking in via telephone, email, or the County's instant messaging client at the beginning of the telework day is considered tardy and may be charged leave appropriately, per County policy.
 - 10.3.1 Repetitive tardiness may result in revocation of the employee's Telework Program participation, in addition to any disciplinary action that may be implemented.

11.0 Monitoring and Modifications

- 11.1 Personnel Coordinators will submit semi-annual reports to the Department of Human Resources, detailing usage of the Telework Program.

12.0 Termination of Telework Agreement

- 12.1 An employee who wishes to end the telework arrangement will notify their direct supervisor in writing or via email. The notification will contain an effective date.
 - 12.1.1 The direct supervisor will forward the notification to their chain of command and the Department of Human Resources.
- 12.2 In addition to any disciplinary action that may be imposed, participation in the Telework Program may be revoked if an employee violates or abuses the Telework Program. If a telework agreement is terminated, the employee's

supervisory chain of command must meet with the employee and provide a list of reasons for the termination.

12.2.1 Violations and abuses include, but are not limited to:

12.2.1.1 Failure to provide satisfactory work performance or products.

12.2.1.2 Failure to adhere to accurate time reporting.


12.2.1.3 Frequent instances of unexcused tardiness or absences from work.

12.2.1.4 Participation in non-work-related activity (excluding defined lunch break periods) during scheduled work hours.

12.3 If office coverage is limited, the supervisor may work with the employee to modify the telework schedule as discussed in 1.6.2.

13.0 Exceptions

13.1 Any and all exceptions to this procedure must be approved in advance by the County Administrator.

Authorized:		Date: 21 May 2020
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Revision Dates:	3/15/2016	5/21/2020		